

**Rhode Island:**  
**Coastal Resources Management Council**  
**Department of Environmental Management**  
**Division of Planning, Statewide Planning Program**

RI State Guide Plan Update:  
Water Quality Management Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

**Tuesday, November 26, 2013**

**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Room 300  
Department of Environmental Management  
235 Promenade Street, Providence

## **Meeting Notes**

### Greetings and Introduction of Members

Committee Members in attendance were: Jane Austin (Save The Bay), Thomas Borden (NBEP), Janine Burke (NWPCA), Kathy Crawley (WRB), Rachel Calabro (RIRC) , Ames Colt (BRWCT), Eugenia Marks (RI Audubon), Vincent Murray (SK Planning Dept.), Jennifer Paquet (Town of West Greenwich), Margharita Pryor (EPA), Marilyn Shellman (Town of Westerly), June Swallow (RIDOH), Judith Swift (URI). DEM/CRMC/Statewide Planning staff in attendance included: Sue Kiernan, Erinie Panciera, Angelo Liberti and Jay Manning of RIDEM, Jeff Willis of CRMC and Paul Gonsalves of Statewide Planning. Guest speaker in attendance included Michael Larocque of RICMFA.

### Introduction and Agenda Overview

Sue Kiernan started the meeting with a brief overview of the agenda, including key subject areas and contributions from several speakers.

### Feedback on OWTS

A significant piece of feedback dealing with OWTS was a suggestion to emphasize the distinction between innovative systems.

## Public Wastewater Treatment Facilities in RI

Sue led the discussion with some back ground information on impaired waters in the Bay (see Map handout). About 32.5 percent of Narragansett Bay is considered impaired. Wastewater treatment facilities are the single largest source of nitrogen in the Bay. Some areas closed to shellfishing are for safety reasons, while other areas are closed due to shoreline activities such-as marinas. Approximately 24% of bay waters are closed to shellfishing. In general, sufficient controls exist to manage wastewater, paid for through the RI Clean Water Finance Agency. Funding sources are mainly through user fees and through utilizing the State Revolving Fund Program. The role of municipalities in wastewater treatment varies. In some cases the municipal role is planning and coordination, while some municipalities are operators.

Through a clean water needs survey, a need was shown for a 50% reduction of impairing substances from treatment plants. It can be achieved in part by continued monitoring, among other mitigation measures. Angelo went on to describe some of the monitoring activities currently at 6 of the municipal treatment plants. The goal is to reduce phosphorus through a pre-treatment program. Also, the wildlife habit effects of wastewater discharge were addressed.

A set of discussion questions was then distributed to the group (see handout). The first question was that of WTF plans and the frequency of their updates. Some Towns may be reluctant to invest heavily in WTFs if they feel that new/expanded sewers may be coming. Facility plans that do exist are usually 20 year plans that estimate future flow and take proposed new sewers into account. Currently 15 out of 19 facilities have plans, with 3 in development. The plans are reviewed by RIDEM's office of Water Resources. Mr. Rhodes then offered a complimentary compliance review by Statewide Planning for any future plans. The group generally agreed that any facility plan should be consistent with the applicable Comprehensive Plan(s), OWT plans and WWSMP(s). Several members of the group supported the idea of municipalities having just one "wastewater" plan to capture goals and policies of both OWTs and WTFs.

The topic of regionalization is seen as an important option in WTF planning. NBC was given as an example where regionalization works well. More information on wastewater regionalization can be found in Water 2030.

Although uncommon, there is a mechanism to implement private wastewater treatment systems for large private developments. There was brief discussion of one sophisticated project in particular that was approved, but never fully

established do other problems that the developer faced. Generally, the development of private systems has not been widely promoted.

“Operations and Maintenance” was the next topic of discussion. Several agreed that an asset management approach to maintaining wastewater infrastructure would work best, as coordination between some public works projects are is not always achieved.

When addressing pollution issues, the idea of sludge and re-use was brought up, but as of now, the economics in RI are just not conducive to this approach. As the regulations stand as of now, most re-use proposals would in fact fall under the jurisdiction of the state building and plumbing codes. Water reuse under appropriate circumstances should be addressed, such as the system in Florida where lawns and other secondary uses are on a different system. It was noted that this SGP element could possibly set the stage for integration of water re-use systems.

The topic of total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) was discussed as it related to coastal areas, where many of the septic issues exist. It was suggested that the group could benefit from a map showing wastewater problem areas. This map could work in conjunction with the Urban Service Boundary (USB) of Land Use 2025. If sewerage areas change, the State Planning Council could amend the USB in the future.

Regarding the issue of financing, the Clean Water Finance Agency is seen as the only viable option currently. The agency though, is in need of more funding. The most pressing need is in the next 3 years, at about \$30 million.

#### Next Meeting Date

The group agreed upon a date of December 17<sup>th</sup> for the next meeting. The topic will be stormwater.